



RONALD M. OVERDAHL / Sentinel photographer

Construction continues on a neighborhood shopping center on the site of the former Century Hall.

The 15,000-square-foot Century Center will have seven stores.

Opening day nears for center rising at ex-Century Hall site

By DAVID STAATS
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A neighborhood shopping center is rising on the ashes of the former Century Hall, which burned in a spectacular five-alarm fire nearly 1½ years ago.

The \$1 million Century Centre is expected to open next month on the East Side when its first tenant, a Blockbuster Videos store, begins doing business, said John (Skip) Bluvstein.

Bluvstein is building the center in a partnership with Milwaukee businessman John Sidoff. Bluvstein and Sidoff had owned Century Hall, which included a restaurant, tavern and small brewery.

The 15,000-square-foot shopping center at 2340 N. Farwell Ave. will include seven stores.

Blockbuster is the largest, with 6,500 square feet. Other tenants that have signed contracts include Pizza Hut, which will open a delivery and carryout restaurant, and Fast Eddie's All-American Food, a deli-style restaurant, Bluvstein said.

Other possibilities include shoe, record, yogurt and card stores and a quick-print shop, Bluvstein said.

"We probably have more than enough to fill the center," he said.

Unlike most East Side businesses, the center has on-site parking, Bluvstein said. It also will benefit from a public, metered parking lot across N. Farwell Ave.

The one-story shopping center, designed by the Peterman Associates Inc. architectural firm, features brown brick and cut limestone with towers on each end and in the middle to add height.

"It's pretty traditional architecture," Bluvstein said. "We tried to make it fit in to the area."

Construction began May 15 and should be finished by the end of September, he said.

Century Hall was razed after the suspected arson fire. The blaze also destroyed a house, a paint store and an apartment building to the south, and those sites are included in the shopping center.

Federal authorities closed their investigation into the blaze after the September 1988 suicide of landlord Daniel W. Giwosky. He was suspected of setting the fire in anger against a business associate with offices in the building that also housed the paint store.